

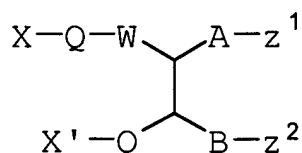
IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1 through 14.

Please add new claims 15 through 36

1 - 14 (Cancelled)

15. (New) A process for preparing a compound of the general formula



(I)

in which one of X and X' represents a polymer, and the other represents a hydrogen atom;

each Q independently represents a linking group;

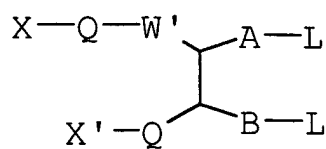
W represents an electron-withdrawing moiety or a moiety preparable by reduction of an electron-withdrawing moiety; or, if X' represents a polymer, X-Q-W- together may represent an electron withdrawing group; and in addition, if X represents a polymer, X' and electron withdrawing group W together with the interjacent atoms may form a ring;

each of Z¹ and Z² independently represents a group derived from a biological molecule, each of which is linked to A and B via a nucleophilic moiety; or Z¹ and Z² together represent a single group derived from a biological molecule which is linked to A and B via two nucleophilic moieties;

A is a C₁₋₅ alkylene or alkenylene chain; and

B is a bond or a C₁₋₄ alkylene or alkenylene chain;

wherein the process comprises reacting either (i) a compound of the general formula



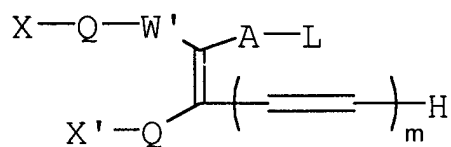
(II)

in which X, X', Q, A and B have the meanings given for the general formula I;

W' represents an electron-withdrawing group or, if X' represents a polymer, X-Q-W' together may represent an electron withdrawing group; and

each L independently represents a leaving group;

or (ii) a compound of the general formula



(III)

in which X, X', Q, W', A and L have the meanings given for the general formula II, and in addition if X represents a polymer, X' and electron-withdrawing group W' together with the interjacent atoms may form a ring, and m represents an integer 1 to 4; with compounds of the general formula $Z^1\text{Nu}$ or $Z^2\text{Nu}$ in which each of Z^1 and Z^2 independently represents a group derived from a biological molecule, or a compound of the formula $Z(\text{Nu})_2$ in which Z represents a biological molecule, and each Nu independently represents a nucleophilic group; and optionally converting a resulting compound of the formula I in which W is an electron-withdrawing group into a corresponding compound of the formula (I) by reduction of the group W'.

16. (New) The process as claimed in claim 15, in which a polymer X or X' is a homo- or copolymer selected from the group consisting of polyalkylene glycols, polyvinylpyrrolidones, polyacrylates, polymethacrylates, polyoxazolines, polyvinylalcohols, polyacrylamides, polymethacrylamides, HPMA copolymers, polyesters, polyacetals, poly(ortho ester)s, polycarbonates, poly(imino carbonate)s, polyamides, copolymers of divinylether-maleic anhydride or styrene-maleic anhydride,

polysaccharides, or polyglutamic acids, any of said homo- or co-polymers optionally being derivatized or functionalized.

17. (New) The process as claimed in claim 16, in which the polymer is a polyethylene glycol.

18. (New) The process as claimed in claim 15, in which each linking group Q independently represents a direct bond, an alkylene group, or an optionally-substituted aryl or heteroaryl group, any of which may be terminated or interrupted by one or more oxygen atoms, sulphur atoms, -NR groups in which R represents an alkyl or aryl group, keto groups, -O-CO- groups and/or -CO-O- groups.

19. (New) The process as claimed in claim 15, in which W' represents a keto or aldehyde group CO, an ester group -O-CO- or a sulphone group -SO₂-.

20. (New) The process as claimed in claim 15, in which the compound of formula (II) or (III) is reacted with a compound of the formula Z(Nu)₂ in which Z represents a biological molecule.

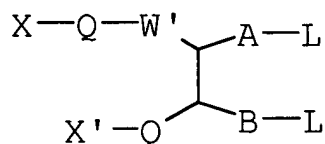
21. (New) The process as claimed in claim 20, in which Z represents a protein.

22. (New) The process as claimed in claim 15, in which each of Z¹ and Z² becomes linked to A and B via thiol groups.

23. (New) The process as claimed in claim 21, in which Z becomes linked to A and B via thiol groups.

24. (New) The process as claimed in claim 15, in which the or each leaving group L represents -SR, -SO₂R, -OSO₂R, -N⁺R₃, -N⁺HR₂, -N⁺H₂R, halogen, or -OØ, in which R represents an alkyl or aryl group and Ø represents a substituted aryl group containing at least one electron withdrawing substituent.

25. (New) A compound comprising the general formula II



(II)

in which one of X and X' represents a polymer, and the other represents a hydrogen atom;

each Q independently represents a linking group;

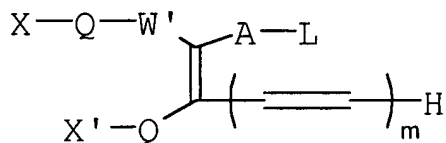
W' represents an electron-withdrawing group or, if X' represents a polymer, X-Q-W' together may represent an electron withdrawing group;

A is a C₁₋₅ alkylene or alkenylene chain; and

B is a bond or a C₁₋₄ alkylene or alkenylene chain; and

each L independently represents a leaving group.

26. (New) A compound having the general formula III



(III)

in which one of X and X' represents a polymer, and the other represents a hydrogen atom;

each Q independently represents a linking group;

W' represents an electron-withdrawing group or, if X' represents a polymer, X-Q-W' together may represent an electron withdrawing group; and in addition if X represents a polymer, X' and electron-withdrawing group W' together with the interjacent atoms may form a ring;

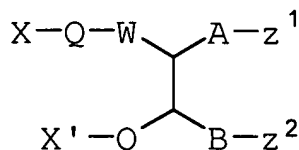
A is a C₁₋₅ alkylene or alkenylene chain;

B is a bond or a C₁₋₄ alkylene or alkenylene chain;

each L independently represents a leaving group; and m represents an integer 1 to

4.

27. (New) A compound having the general formula I



(I)

in which one of X and X' represents a homo- or copolymer selected from the group consisting of polyalkylene glycols, polyvinylpyrrolidones, polyacrylates, polymethacrylates, polyoxazolines, polyvinylalcohols, polyacrylamides, polymethacrylamides, HPMA copolymers, polyesters, polyacetals, poly(ortho ester)s, polycarbonates, poly(imino carbonate)s, copolymers of divinylether-maleic anhydride or styrene-maleic anhydride, polysaccharides, or polyglutamic acids, any of said homo- or co-polymers optionally being derivatized or functionalized; and the other represents a hydrogen atom;

each Q independently represents a linking group;

W represents an electron-withdrawing moiety or a moiety preparable by reduction of an electron-withdrawing moiety; or, if X' represents a polymer, X-Q-W- together may represent an electron withdrawing group; and in addition, if X represents a polymer, X' and electron withdrawing group W together with the interjacent atoms may form a ring;

each of Z¹ and Z² independently represents a group derived from a biological molecule, each of which is linked to A and B via a nucleophilic moiety; or Z¹ and Z² together represent a single group derived from a biological molecule which is linked to A and B via two nucleophilic moieties;

A is a C₁₋₅ alkylene or alkenylene chain; and

B is a bond or a C₁₋₄ alkylene or alkenylene chain.

28. (New) The compound as claimed in claim 27, in which the polymer X or X' is a polyethylene glycol.

29. (New) The compound as claimed in claim 27, in which each linking group Q independently represents a direct bond, an alkylene group, or an optionally-substituted aryl or heteroaryl group, any of which may be terminated or interrupted by one or more oxygen atoms, sulphur atoms, -NR groups in which R represents an alkyl or aryl group, keto groups, -O-CO- groups and/or -CO-O- groups.

30. (New) The compound as claimed in claim 27, in which W represents a keto or aldehyde group CO, an ester group -O-CO- or a sulphone group -SO₂-, or a group obtained by reduction of such a group, or X-Q-W- together represent a cyano group.

31. (New) The compound as claimed in claim 27, in which Z¹ and Z² together represent a single biological molecule.

32. (New) The compound as claimed in claim 31, in which Z¹ and Z² together represent a protein.

33. (New) The compound as claimed in claim 32, in which the protein is linked to A and B via thiol groups.

34. (New) The compound as claimed in claim 33, in which said thiol groups have been generated by partial reduction of a disulphide bridge.

35. (New) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a physiologically tolerable compound as claimed in claim 27, together with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

36. (New) A method for treating a patient, the method comprising administering a pharmaceutically-effective amount of the pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 35 to the patient.